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of Job**

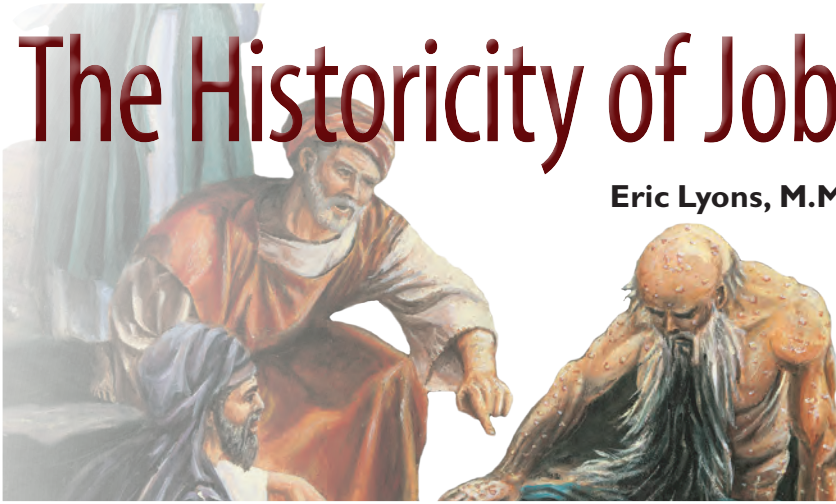
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# The Historicity of Job

Eric Lyons, M.Min.



**O**VER the last several centuries, many have attempted to fictionalize the Bible. Atheists vigorously attack the Genesis account of Creation, calling it nothing more than a fictitious story that should be placed alongside myths such as the Babylonian creation account. Skeptics scoff at the biblical account of the worldwide Flood, calling it an altered copy of the uninspired *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Liberal theologians labor to make Scripture conform to secular sources, claiming that the Israelite religion is a mere “Yahwization” of pagan religions (i.e., attributing to Yahweh what pagan religions attributed to their gods). Certain professors at Christian colleges have even cast doubt on the historicity of Jonah. They have referred to it as “just a short story” that “might even be regarded as historical fiction.” “[A] lot of books today” may “have a ring of historical accuracy,” they say, “just like the book of Jonah,” but “[d]oes that make it history? Well, no. No, it doesn’t” (Pemberton, 2002, 22:26-22:44). Such attempts to fictionalize Scripture or cast doubt on the true nature of its historical accounts represent a blatant attack upon God’s Word and should be refuted with all diligence in “meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

Some believe the book of Job is little more than a fine piece of non-inspired literature. Others contend it is inspired of God, but, like happenings in Genesis and Jonah, the book of Job is said to be a fictional story about imaginary people, places, and events, told for spiritual purposes. What do the facts reveal? Are there good reasons to believe that this story is a real, unembellished account of events that occurred long ago?

## JOB, THE MAN

**I**N a single day, the patriarch Job was informed of the loss of all 10 of his children, all of his livestock, and many of his servants. In chapter 1 of the book of Job, we learn that as one of Job’s servants was telling him about a group of raiders (the Sabeans) that had stolen all of his oxen and donkeys, and killed all the servants tending to the animals (except himself), another servant arrived even as the first “was still speaking.” This second servant told Job that fire came down from heaven and consumed his sheep and servants. Again, while this servant was talking, a third servant came and related to Job that another group of invaders (the Chaldeans) had stolen all of his camels and had killed all of the servants except him. Finally, while this third servant was talking,

a fourth servant came and bore even worse news—Job’s 10 children had all perished when a great wind struck the house and caused it to crush them. His 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, several servants, and 10 children were all gone in the blink of an eye. And, as if being stripped of his worldly possessions and children were not enough, Job’s body then became diseased from head to toe, his wife urged him to “curse God and die,” and the comforting counsel of his “friends” quickly gave way to judgmental accusations.

Based upon the extent of his physical destruction and mental suffering, as well as the limited time frame in which it all occurred, some critics doubt that Job was a real person. They believe that he simply was fabricated to teach a lesson about human suffering. Perhaps, they say, he is to be valued like such parabolic figures as the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), or the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21), but not like those who actually lived and died upon the Earth.

I will never forget having a discussion about Job with a Christian gentleman several years ago, who, with a skeptical expression on his face, informed me that he did not believe the story of Job was real history. The idea was: “No one has ever gone through that much pain that quickly.” Up to that point in time, however, I do not think this brother had ever considered the overwhelming evidence for Job’s reality.

## Job’s Humanity

Unlike the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich fool, and other parabolic figures, the suffering patriarch of the Old Testament, whose story is recorded in forty-two chapters of the

most beautiful language this world has ever known, was given a name—Job. The book begins: “There was a **man** in the land of Uz, **whose name was Job**” (1:1, emp. added). He wasn’t just an obscure man in a far-away land who was the main character of a “once-upon-a-time” kind of fairytale. He was a real, “mortal” man (cf. 4:17), of whom his Creator said: “[T]here is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (1:8). He “was the greatest of all the people of the East” (1:3). That Job was a real person is stated explicitly by God in his second speech to Job, when He declared that the mighty animal called behemoth was “**made along with you**” (40:15, emp. added).

In the book of Job, the patriarch’s wealth is catalogued, his homeland is identified (cf. Jeremiah 25:20; Lamentations 4:21), his father is referenced (Job 15:10), his children are numbered, his wife is quoted, his friends are named, his speeches are recorded, and his suffering is described in detail. Job spoke of his birth, and even his conception (3:3), and longed for death in order to escape his severe distress (6:8-10). His suffering was not here one day and gone the next, nor did it go on endlessly. It lasted for “months” (7:3; 29:2) and was specifically characterized by boils (2:7-8), bad breath (19:17), loss of weight (19:20), disfiguration (2:12), blackened, cracked skin that was infested with worms (30:30; 7:5), and bones that burned with piercing pain (30:17,30). Job’s suffering was as real as Job himself.

### Job’s Descent

Still, some may contend, “We know that Eliphaz was a Temanite, Bildad a Shuhite, Zophar a Naamathite (Job 2:11), and that Elihu was called, ‘the

son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram’ (Job 32:2), yet Job has no revealed heritage.” “Who was his father? Where is his genealogy? Why don’t we know more about Job’s heritage, if he was a real person?”

The Bible is replete with real, historical men and women who have little, if any, background information given about them. Are we to assume that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (Daniel 1:7), Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), Diotrefes (3 John 9), and Lydia (Acts 16:14) were all fictional characters because we have no information about their families? And what about Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18), who was “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (Hebrews 7:3)? Was he an imaginary character? In truth, Melchizedek is as historical as Abraham, who paid him tithes (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:2), and as real as Jesus, Who was a priest, “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:17,21).

Similar to how Melchizedek’s ancestry was intentionally omitted in Scripture

in order to illustrate the perfect type of priest that Jesus, the great High Priest, would be, the little information that we have about Job was no doubt intentional. Admittedly, patriarchs are often introduced in the biblical text with at least some genealogical information (e.g., Genesis 11:26-29), while Job is not. We know neither his family nor his race. We do not know for sure when he lived or exactly where he lived (i.e., precisely where Uz was cannot be said with certainty). However, as Perry Cotham concluded: “[T]his in God’s wisdom is all the better for the purpose of the great book because it makes Job a universal man, a representative, as it were, of all mankind in his relationship to God” (Cotham, 1991, p. 40). People of all colors, classes, clans, countries, and kingdoms can find great strength and encouragement from the real, true-life story of Job.

### Job’s Name

Let us also establish the fact that the name “Job” (Hebrew *Iyob* or *Iob* in the Septuagint) was no literary invention; it was an actual name worn by

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various ones throughout history. Jacob had a grandson named Job (Genesis 46:13; or Yob/Iob, ESV, NASB). Furthermore, as Francis Anderson noted in his commentary on Job, “The name [Job—EL] is attested several times throughout the second millennium BC as an old Canaanite name sometimes borne by royal personages. It occurs in an Egyptian execration text of the nineteenth century BC.... Later the Ugaritic *ayab* agrees with the South Canaanite name *A-ya-ab* in Amarna letters” (Anderson, 1974, p. 78). Although some believe that Job means either “object of enmity” or “he who turns to God” (Genung, 2006), the eminent and respected archaeologist W.F. Albright believed these ancient references support the explanation that the name originally meant, “Where is (my) Father?” (Hartley, 1988, p. 66; Anderson, p. 78). Such a meaning fits perfectly with the book of Job, considering (1) no father or genealogy is given for the patriarch, and (2) throughout his speeches, Job longs to speak with God, his Father by creation (10:2-3,9; 13:3,20-22; 31:35-37).

### Job's Anonymous Wife

Some have suggested that since the patriarch's wife is referred to but never named (Job 2:9; 19:17; 31:10), the book of Job falls in line more with a parable and not a literal story (cf. Cunningham, 2011). Such a claim, however, disregards two important points. First, several of the leading characters in the story **are** specifically named, including Jehovah, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, as well as three of Job's daughters: Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch. Simply because someone in a story is not called by name, in no way relegates that story to a parable, especially when so many other individuals in the

story **are** named. Second, there are **many** real, historical women in the Bible whose names are also unknown to us, including, and especially, the women of patriarchal times. Adam and Eve's daughters are never named (Genesis 5:4), nor are Lot's (Genesis 19). The wives of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth are omitted in Scripture even though they were crucial in God's plan for mankind to repopulate the Earth. Other men living in patriarchal times whose wives' names are not mentioned by name in Holy Writ include Cain, Lot, Laban, and Potiphar. Furthermore, the names of many women in New Testament times remain unknown to us, including James and John's mother (Matthew 20:20), Peter's mother in law (Matthew 8:14), Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18), the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), and many others (Luke 8:3). Obviously, then, the fact that Job's wife, who is only mentioned three times in the book of Job, is not referred to by name has no bearing whatsoever on the historicity of Job.

### Other Citations of Job in Scripture

Not only are there several indicators within the book of Job that the suffering patriarch was a real, flesh-and-blood human being (and not just a parabolic figure), Job also is mentioned in Scripture outside of the book that bears his name. In fact, Job is mentioned in three different verses in Scripture (outside the book of Job), none of which lead one to believe that Job is a fictional character. Rather, he is considered an actual, historical figure.

The first two places his name is found (aside from the book of Job) is in Ezekiel 14, verses 14 and 20. In verse 14, the prophet stated: “Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by

their righteousness, says the Lord God.” Verse 20 is worded nearly the same way: “[E]ven though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.” Ezekiel's point in both verses was that the ungodly conditions in Babylon were such that even if Noah, Daniel, and Job lived in that city, no one else would be saved. Ezekiel spoke of all three of these men as being real, historical people, not legendary characters. If one recognizes Noah and Daniel as being real people of history, then there is no reason to think otherwise about Job. Yes, Job's story is written in beautiful, poetic language and grouped with other poetic books in the wisdom section of the Old Testament. Still, God's inspired prophet Ezekiel believed Job's life was as real and genuine as Noah's and Daniel's. [NOTE: Numerous real people and places are noted and described in the poetic books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. It would be unwise and inconsistent to disregard Job's historicity merely because it is written largely in poetic language.]

The last place the suffering patriarch is mentioned in Scripture (and the only time he is mentioned in the New Testament) is found in the latter part of the book of James. The brother of the Lord wrote: “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. **You have heard of the perseverance of Job** and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (James 5:10-11, emp. added). James was not writing through inspiration



## Have Synthetic Biologists Created Life From Non-Life?

Jeff Miller, Ph.D.

You may have heard of the field of science known as synthetic biology. In this highly advanced area of science, engineers utilize their understanding of biology to “create” new life forms not found in nature. According to *SyntheticBiology.org*, synthetic biology involves “the design and construction of new biological parts, devices, and systems” and “the re-design of existing, natural biological systems for useful purposes” (“Synthetic Biology,” 2012). Perhaps this conjures up in your mind, as it does in the minds of many others, images of Dr. Frankenstein sewing pieces of dead tissue together into a monster on his laboratory table and bringing it to life. Is this what goes on in synthetic biology? Can scientists create life?

In a word: **no**. Life cannot come from non-life without supernatural help (cf. Miller, 2012). God alone “gives to all life” (Acts 17:25). Notice that a careful reading of what synthetic biology involves reveals that these engineers are designing and constructing new biological parts, not life; re-designing **existing** biological systems, not bringing systems to life. Earlier this year, *The New York Times* ran an article highlighting the remarkable work of Craig Venter, a synthetic biologist who is working on a project involving designing custom bugs. According to the article,

Each of the bugs will have a mission. Some will be designed to devour things, like pollution. Others will generate food and fuel. There will be bugs to fight global warming, bugs to clean up toxic waste, bugs to manufacture medicine and diagnose disease, and they will all be driven to complete these tasks by the very fibers of their synthetic DNA (Hylton, 2012).

There is no doubt that such feats of engineering would be worth high accolades and recognition from the scientific community but, again, Venter is not creating life itself.

Though the authors might wish to “accidentally” convey that idea, since such a feat would certainly attract more attention to the article, a careful reading of the fairly lengthy story reveals the truth. Venter’s methods involve manufacturing DNA and injecting it into a host cell. “It

means taking four bottles of chemicals—the adenine, thymine, cytosine, and guanine that make up DNA—and linking them into a daisy chain at least half a million units long, then inserting that molecule into a host cell” that they hope will be able to reproduce. “[T]he DNA was modeled on a natural organism and was inserted into a natural cell.” So a cell is already alive and in existence, and the man-made (i.e., man-mixed) DNA is injected into the living cell. Venter, himself, notes that his team is constructing the DNA, not the cell. “It is just the DNA. You have to have the cell there to read it” (Hylton).

Notice also that the life forms being developed are not completely new designs. According to the article, “the DNA was modeled on a natural organism” (Hylton). Nobel laureate David Baltimore, commenting on Venter’s work, said, “He has not created life, only mimicked it” (Hylton). In other words, this is another example of biomimicry—an act of plagiarism, in a sense, when carried out by atheists.

So, life has not been created. The cell is already alive when it is manipulated by engineers using their DNA designs. A new life form is being designed, but life itself has not been created from non-life. The Law of Biogenesis stands. In nature, life comes only from life of its kind. God is needed in the recipe in order to arrive at life from non-life. [NOTE: For more on Venter and synthetic biology, see Deweese, 2010]

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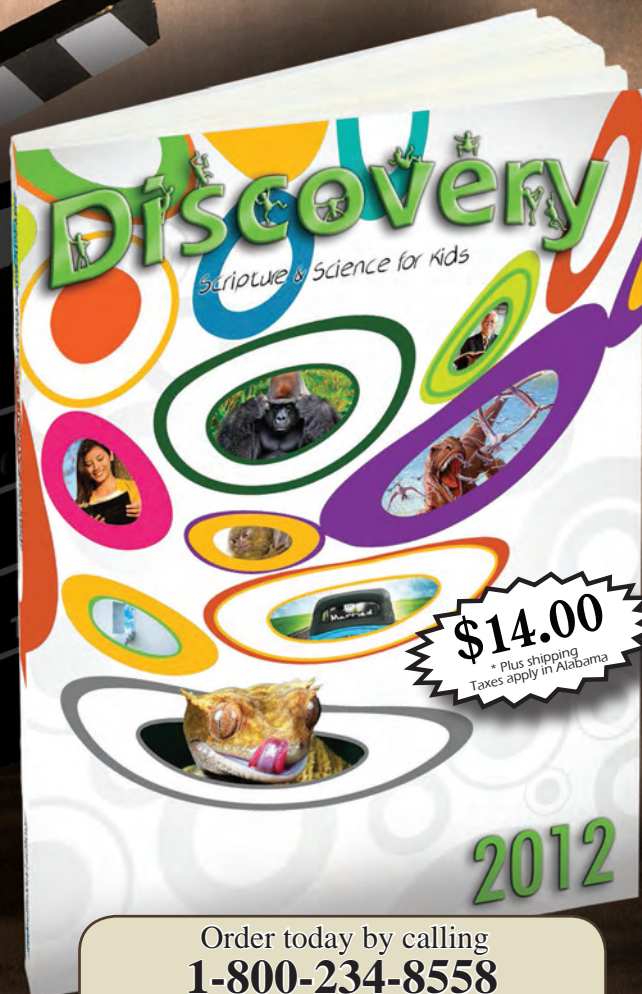
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about an imaginary person. Rather, he considered Job as real as Abraham, Elijah, and Rahab—historical individuals whom James also mentioned in his epistle (2:21,25; 5:17).

### JOB'S "UNBELIEVABLE" SUFFERING

**M**ORE than anything else, what causes the most skepticism about Job are the intense losses that he endured in such a short period of time. How can a man learn of the loss of 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, numerous servants, and, most tragically, 10 children **in one day**? It simply is too much for some to believe.

### Job and Evolution

Yet, some of the same individuals who doubt the historicity of the suffering of Job maintain that the theory of evolution is a **fact**. Both atheistic and theistic evolutionists believe that over billions of years of time, a multi-cellular creature evolved into a worm, which evolved into a fish, which evolved into an amphibian, which evolved into a reptile, which evolved into an ape-like creature, which evolved into a human. Allegedly, an amazing human being with functional eyes, ears, arms, legs, fingers, toes, lungs, etc., could evolve given enough time, mutations, and **random chance processes**. Supposedly, the unnatural, unproven, law-breaking theory of evolution is believable—but not the story of Job. “The lady doth protest too much, methinks” (Shakespeare, 2011, III.2).

### Others Throughout History Have Suffered Greatly

It may be that no one in world history has ever suffered as much as did Job in one day. However, there have been many tragic stories throughout history. Since likely everyone would agree

that there have been innumerable true accounts of individuals and families throughout history losing virtually all of their wealth in the blink of an eye due to fires, floods, thefts, bankruptcies, depressions, stock-market plunges, etc. (e.g., Charles Prestwood, see Hundley, 2002), there seems little reason to document such financial losses. What's more, even if we did document many such unfortunate happenings, it would be greatly overshadowed by the loss of all of Job's children. When the life and death of those whom we love dearly comes into focus, often even the most materialistic among us see that financial ruin does not compare with the loss of loved ones.

But Job was also not the only one ever to have to deal with a great family tragedy in a short period of time. I know a woman who lost her mother and one of her two sons within one week of each other. She then buried her husband a year later. Portland, Oregon mother, Marva Davis, lost two sons on the same day—January 29, 2010. Her 23-year-old son died of heart and kidney failure in the morning, followed by her 25-year-old son being shot by a police officer later that night (“Oregon Woman...,” 2010). Alicia Appleman-Jurman was one of countless Jews who experienced heart-breaking losses and difficulties during the Holocaust. In addition to her suffering and surviving ghettoization, imprisonment, starvation, a trip to an extermination center, and a firing squad, all within a four-year period, she lost every immediate family member. The Nazis shot her mother, father, and two of her brothers. One brother was hanged, while another died needlessly in a Russian prison. Alicia was the only member of

her immediate family to survive the Holocaust (Appleman-Jurman, 1989).

### Many Faithful Believers Have Experienced Great Pain

The Bible is full of faithful men and women who suffered greatly. Imagine the sorrow that Noah and his family felt as they watched and/or heard innumerable souls (perhaps millions of people) perish in the Flood—many of whom, no doubt, were relatives. Consider the heartache that Lot, his wife, and daughters must have felt as their family members, friends, and home were destroyed with fire and brimstone—and then as Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:24-26).

The apostle Paul was “in prisons... frequently” and “in deaths often.” Five times he received 39 lashings. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. Three times he was shipwrecked (2 Corinthians 11:23-25). In addition to being in all kinds of “perils” (2 Corinthians 11:26), he was “in weariness and toil...in hunger and thirst,” as well as “in cold and nakedness” (2 Corinthians 11:27). Paul was a persecuted apostle, who suffered greatly, in addition to being in continual pain with some sort of “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). The apostles as a whole were “made a spectacle to the world,” were “dishonored...poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless” (1 Corinthians 4:10-11). They were “reviled,” “persecuted,” and “defamed” (1 Corinthians 4:12-13). They were “made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things” (1 Corinthians 4:13). In addition to inspiration informing us that the apostle James was killed with the sword (Acts 12:2), *Fox's Book of Martyrs* indicates that Matthew was slain with a halberd, Mathias was



stoned and beheaded, Andrew was crucified, Thomas was killed with a spear, Paul was beheaded, and Peter was crucified (most likely upside down) (Forbush, 1954, pp. 2-5).

Faithful men and women of God have been “tortured” (Hebrews 11:35). “They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:38b). “Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:36-38a). Job is certainly one of the greatest examples of steadfastness in the face of suffering, but he is far from the only one to suffer severely.

### A Modern-Day Tragedy

One of the most heart-rending, instant, unexpected tragedies to happen to a family in recent years occurred near Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Tuesday, November 8, 1994. Scott and Janet Willis were traveling with six of their nine children on Interstate 94 to Watertown, Wisconsin to visit their older son, Dan, and his new wife, and to celebrate two upcoming birthdays. Before ever reaching Watertown, however, the Willis van struck a piece of metal that had fallen off of a truck. The metal pierced the gas tank, which quickly caused gas to leak. “Seconds later, sparks caused as the metal bracket dragged against the pavement ignited the van” (Backover and Lev, 1994). The van “exploded in flames” (“Parents Bury...,” 1994). Five of the children in the van died almost instantly in the fire. Another escaped with burns covering 90% of his body, but died

later that night at the hospital. Scott and Janet were hospitalized for several days with first and second degree burns. Such physical wounds, however, did not compare with the “indescribable” pain they felt at losing six children in one freak accident (Gillmore, n.d.).

What are the odds of something like this happening? Sheriff’s Sergeant David Lushowitz commented on the accident, saying, “I’ve never seen an accident like this before.... **The odds are astronomical**” (as quoted in Backover and Lev, emp. added). According to *Chicago Tribune* staff writers Backover and Lev, “Highway statistics support the characterization by Milwaukee investigators that the van accident was a **freak occurrence**” (emp. added).

### Remembering the Circumstances of Job’s Suffering

Although man has documented many cases of severe, instantaneous suffering throughout history, some still refuse to believe the events in Job (especially chapters 1, 2, and 42) actually could occur. In an article titled, “Could the Story of Job be a Parable?” Chuck Cunningham wrote: “Four calamities result from Yahweh talking to the accuser. There is one survivor in each calamity to tell the story of Job. What are the odds of this happening?... Job begins with seven sons and three daughters, which all die. Job ends up with another seven sons and three daughters. What are the odds of that happening?” The idea is: “It’s too much, too soon—all of which is too ironic” (2011).

Admittedly, even in light of the cases of acute suffering that secular history has recorded for us, Job’s affliction does seem somewhat inconceivable. However, there is one important point

to remember: **Job’s story does not begin in Job 1:13** (when the Sabaeans first came and stole all of Job’s oxen and donkeys and killed all of the servants in the area). The story of Job’s suffering begins in **Job 1:6**, on the day Satan came before the Lord. When God mentioned His faithful servant to Satan, the wicked one arrogantly implied that Job did not serve God for nothing (i.e., the Lord allegedly is not innately worthy of faithful service). God had blessed the patriarch and apparently had not allowed Satan to harm him as the devil went “to and fro on the earth” (Job 1:7), “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). For reasons that God does not reveal, He allowed Satan temporary access to “all that he [Job] has” (Job 1:12), which later would even include his health (2:4-7). In ways unknown to us, Satan orchestrated the murderous raids of the Sabaeans and Chaldeans, the fire from heaven, the great wind, and the physical suffering that Job endured (1:13-19; 2:1-7). The same Satan who tempted Adam and Eve to sin; the same devil who sought to ruin the perfect life of Jesus at His weakest point (Matthew 4:1-11); the same wicked one who “bound” a woman with “a spirit of infirmity eighteen years” (Luke 13:11,16) and “oppressed” many others in the first century (Acts 10:38), also afflicted Job immensely. Taking into account Satan’s personal role in Job’s acute, virtually instantaneous suffering, the “unlikely,” “improbable” events become plausible.

### HOW COULD GOD DO THIS?

**SOME** discount the historic reality of the book of Job, because they cannot reconcile an all-loving God with what He allowed to happen to Job and those around him.



According to Cunningham, “This is not our Elohim,...but more like a Greek Yahweh who plays with the lives of men. These accounts contradict the rest of Yahweh’s Word and Yahweh cannot contradict Himself.... We have taken the Book of Job literally instead of taking it as a parable” (2011). Similarly, Kelvin Stubbs asked, “God allows this man to have all that matters to him taken away, his family killed...and we’re supposed to be inspired?... How can you love a God who treats one of his most devout followers in this manner?” (2009).

### Did God Cause Job to Suffer?

In truth, it was **Satan** who “did this.” Yes, God did say to Satan: “[Y]ou incited Me against him [Job], to destroy him without a cause” (2:3), and later, the book does speak of “all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him” (42:11). The fact is, however, these statements are examples of the idiomatic language found throughout Scripture, which actually express “not the doing of the thing, but the permission of the thing which the agent is said to do” (Bullinger, 1898, p. 823). The Bible writers often alluded to God’s allowance of something to take place as having been done by the Lord. For example, 2 Samuel 24:1 indicates that God “moved David...to number Israel,” while 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that it was **Satan** who “stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.” The meaning is: Israel suffered as a direct result of Satan’s workings in the life of King David, which God allowed.

Consider also that Moses recorded how “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (Exodus 7:3,13; 9:12; 10:1; etc.). But God did not directly force Pharaoh to reject His will. Rather, God hardened his heart in the sense that God provided

the circumstances and the occasion for Pharaoh to accept or reject His will. God sent Moses to place His demands before Pharaoh, even accompanying His Word with miracles, but Pharaoh made up his own mind to resist God’s demands. God provided the occasion for Pharaoh to demonstrate his unyielding attitude, but He was not the author (or direct cause) of Pharaoh’s defiance (see Butt and Miller, 2003 for more information). Similarly, God **permitted** Satan to afflict Job, but He did not directly cause Job’s suffering. It was “**Satan**” who “went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job” (2:7).

### Would a Loving God Really Allow Job and Others to Suffer?

Regardless of whether God “allowed” Job’s suffering or “caused” it, some do not believe that a loving God would remove His providential protection from a faithful servant, bring his name up to Satan for consideration, and allow Job and so many others (i.e., his wife, children, and servants) to suffer and even die. Such God-allowed suffering has led atheists to reject Job and God altogether, while causing certain professed Bible-believers to interpret Job as a parabolic drama. Since the “the evil, pain, and suffering argument” against God’s existence has been thoroughly and logically answered many times in the past (cf. Miller and Butt, 2009; Warren, 1972), we will only respond to the professed Christian’s accusation about Job—that the book must be parabolic because God would never treat someone like He treated Job, his children, and his servants.

How is a **parabolic** story about God allowing Satan to destroy Job’s children and servants, as well as cause great physical pain for Job, somehow acceptable, but not a **real-life** story?

A parable may be a fictitious story, but it has a moral or spiritual meaning. The Greek word *parabole* (from which we get the English word “parable”) means “to throw alongside.” It is “a story by which **something real in life** is used as a means of presenting a moral thought” (Dungan, n.d., p. 227, emp. added). Even if Job was a parable (which the evidence is decisively against), how would that immediately solve the “problem” of God allowing Job and others to suffer? Whether a true-life story about God or a parabolic story, any God-inspired story about Himself is going to properly reflect His perfect attributes. Turning the book of Job into a parable in no way means that “nothing in the book as it relates to God is really what it seems to be.”

The fact is, God’s actions in the book of Job are real, and consistent both with His nature and with the rest of Scripture. God **is** all-loving (1 John 4:8), but such love is not contrary to God allowing His faithful followers to suffer. Even though He will not tempt His children to do evil (James 1:13), God will test us (Genesis 22:1; Exodus 20:20) and discipline us (Hebrews 12:3-11). He will even allow us to die, knowing that a much greater life awaits us on the other side of physical death (Hebrews 11:10,16; John 14:1-3). He allowed John the Baptist, Stephen, James the apostle, and many others, including the Messiah, to suffer and die. We must keep in mind, as Thomas Warren observed: God created the world, not as man’s final and ultimate destination, but as “the ideal environment for soul-making” (1972, p. 16). The difficulties that God allows or even brings about in this life “encourage people to cultivate their spirits and to grow in moral character—acquiring virtuous



attributes such as courage, patience, humility, and fortitude (James 1:2-3; Romans 5:3-4). Suffering can serve as discipline and motivation to spur spiritual growth and strength. It literally stimulates people to develop compassion, sympathy, love, and empathy for their fellowman" (Miller and Butt; cf. Warren, p. 81).

But why did God allow Job's children and servants to die? Why did He not spare their lives as He spared Job's? God does not give us the answer to these questions. He does not tell us everything He knows, or that we might like to know (cf. Isaiah 55:8-9; Deuteronomy 29:29). What we can know is this: God always has a good reason for what He does. Perhaps He was rewarding Job's 10 children and all of the servants with an early entrance into Paradise (cf. 2 Kings 2:11; Philippians 1:21,23). Or, if the children and servants were wicked, perhaps God used the occasion to punish them with physical death, just as He has done many times throughout history (Genesis 6-8; 19; Leviticus 10:1-2; Numbers 16; Acts 5:1-11). The fact is, one cannot assume that God's allowance of Satan to kill Job's children and servants is inconsistent with His loving nature.

## CONCLUSION

**A**LTHOUGH much about the book of Job remains a mystery (exactly when Job lived, who wrote the book that bears his name, where the Land of Uz was located, etc.), **we can know that he was a real person** who suffered greatly—perhaps like no person has ever suffered—and yet remained faithful to God. And therein lies one of the main purposes of Job's preserved story: the patriarch is an inspiration to every child of God who is determined

to follow the Lord "in the paths of righteousness," even while walking "through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:3-4). Knowing that Job persevered through all his trials and tribulations gives us hope that we can do the same when similar trials of less magnitude come our way (James 1:2-4; 5:10-11).

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## SPEAKING SCHEDULES

### Kyle Butt

January 13	Montgomery, AL	(334) 272-2561
January 19	Savannah, TN	(731) 925-4442
January 21	Lakeland, FL	(863) 683-4043

### Eric Lyons

January 11-13	Milton, FL	(850) 623-8191
January 25	Grady, AL	(334) 562-9395

### Dave Miller

February 22-24	Sebring, FL	(863) 471-7000
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### Jeff Miller

January 6	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
January 10,17,31	Montgomery, AL	(334) 272-8558





## NOTE FROM *The Editor*



### *2012 Bound Volumes & New Children's Book!*

We are pleased to announce the availability of bound volumes for our two monthly magazines for 2012. These bound volumes enable the articles contained therein to extend their influence for years to come. The bound volume of *Reason & Revelation* for 2012 contains several meaningful articles, including:

- The Law of Biogenesis
- AP Scientists Seminar: "Designed to Perfection"
- Why Did God Create People Knowing that Many Would Go To Hell?
- *Australopithecus Sediba*: Evolutionary Game Changer?
- Homosexual Parenting Hurts Children
- Large Hadron Collider: a Big Bang Machine?
- Shrewbot's Synthetic Whiskers Detect God
- The Prophecy of Daniel 8
- Space: The Womb of Life?
- Bart Ehrman's *Forged*
- Why America Must be Punished
- Gorilla Genome Reveals Interesting Discovery
- Higgs Boson—The "God Particle"? (Update)
- Literal Creationists Holding Their Ground
- The Treaty of Tripoli and America's Founders
- What You Can Never Know Based on a Fossil
- Did Hebrew Writers Borrow Mythology?
- California Law Bans Professional Counselors from...Same Sex Attraction Issues
- The Mayan Calendar and the End of the World

The bound volume sells for \$12. Previous volumes from 1998-2011 are still available at \$6 each.

Additionally, the 2012 bound volume of *Discovery*, our monthly magazine on Scripture and science for children, is available for \$14. During 2012, *Discovery* contained articles on such timely topics as: Old and New Testament Differences; Design in Animals; Water; Heaven or Hell?; Tiny Animals; A Trip to the Zoo; Marriage; Big Bang; Organization of the Church; Dinosaurs; and God's Plan of Salvation. These will build the faith of children. We also have in stock bound volumes for 1999-2011 at \$7 each. Please be reminded that for both *Discovery* and *Reason & Revelation*, whenever the bound volumes go out of print, they are gone forever; we do not reprint them. **So be sure to order your copies soon.**

We are truly happy to announce the release of a new and exciting children's book. In harmony with the Bible's own rationale (Romans 1:19-20), this powerful volume sets forth the design argument in terms of the amazing animal creation. Stunning pictures and outstanding text, this high quality, hardback book will instill in children the reality of the Creator Who made animals during Creation week without any "assistance" from the phony notion of evolution. Please consider buying copies to give to the children in your acquaintance. You may well be the tool the Lord desires to use to solidify a child's spiritual future.

**Dave Miller**

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